Dr James

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A

Dissertation

On

Scrofula

By Charles Bonefield

Pennsylvania

For a Degree of

Doctor of Medicine.

1829

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Scrofula from Scrofa a Pig —

It is also called Kings-Evil because Edward the confessor and other succeeding kings of England pretended to cure it by the touch. It generally makes its appearance at an early period of life: usually from the third to the seventh year. very seldom after puberty though puberty does not exempt a person from an attack, when a predisposition exists. But those which are most generally the victims of the disease: and are most susceptible of it; are children of lax fibres, placid habit, smooth skin fair, and rosy cheeks. thick upper lip. eyes of a light grey or blue colour. the belly swollen and prominant. eyelids droop unnaturally. head large and protuberant. It is thought to be hereditary and always attacks those a family who most resemble

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the diseased parent; it is something peculiar in this disease, that it will let one generation pass unmolested and attack the succeeding with as much malignity as those from whom it was first entailed. A Rachitic diathesis may also be a predisposing cause. Exciting causes. In latitude from 45° to 60° is the climate in which the disease generally exists; great vicissitudes of weather or temperature, when the inclemency of the weather is of long duration; sleeping in wet clothes, damps and crowded places, hard indigestible food; not having sufficient nourishment, a sedentary mode of living, want of sufficient clothing, bodily fatigue, impure water, and in short any thing which tends to deprave or debilitate the system; more particularly the

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digestive apparatus: will be found adequate to excite a predisposition to Scrofula. Pathology. Dr Cullen, supposed the disease to depend upon a peculiar constitution of the lymphatic system. But it is now generally acceded that it depends mainly upon a disordered condition of the whole digestive apparatus, subservient to the processes of digestion, assimilation, and nutrition. Commencing in the stomach, thence extending to the mesenteric glands progressing to the lymphatics, which ultimately become prominently affected by inflamation. It enjoins its exacerbations with the period of the seasons, making its first appearance in the latter part of winter: continuing through the spring, and gradually subsiding in the summer, and breaking out the ensuing spring to follow the same course.

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The first appearance we have of the disease is small spherical tumours situated under the skin; without pain, or unnatural heat or colour; they make their appearance behind the ears, under the chin, affecting the lymphatic glands; very rarely the salivary glands untill far advanced. The worst form is that in which the joints become affected, and we have deep excruciating pain, increased by walking; though they generally in those situations form a hard mass encircling the joints, impeding; and sometimes intercepting motion entirely. At other times the disease is transferred to the internal organs; producing marasmus &c. After some time has elapsed sometimes two or three years; at otheritimes only a few months the tumours become more elevated and

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cartilages, ligaments and even the bones become affected, and the whole system is deranged with its peculiar excitement. Phthisis. and hectic supervene and prove fatal. In Dissections we find many of the viscera in a morbid state. the glands of the Mesentery are tumefied and ulcerated. The Treatment may be divided into two stages 1st When we have no tumours, but when we have evidence of a scrofulous disposition. 2nd When tumours. or ulcers, make their appearance and which require a particular treatment. The first stage requires only preventative means. and may be afforded by removing the patient from the cause, clothing being warm and comfortable: exercise being taken every day. though not sufficient to fatigue themselves. the alimentary canal may be evacuated. by Emetics. though

Cathartics are preferred, they may be given every 3 or 4 days: we generally find the stools of a clayey colour; and hence Calomel alone, or combined with Rhubarb, followed by vegetable bitters, Chalybeates, and likewise the warm, and cold bath. The second stage must be treated both general, and local. Bleeding is sometimes demanded by the state of the humours, which are always more painful; Mercury may be used as an alterative, in ¼ grain doses two or three times a day, for several weeks it is found to be very efficacious, but when it is given so as to salivate it is evidently pernicious. Medicines of the narcotic tribe have been used and many with success, among which are the Cicuta, Datura Stramonium, Hyoscyamus & Hemlock

has been used both internally and externally for discussing obstinate tumours. The expressed juice of the bistilago, or a decoction of the dried leaves has been used, and 'tis said with very good effect. When tumours first make their appearance we should endeavour to discuss them, and thus save the patient much unnecessary pain. The applications used for this purpose are cold applications, mercurial frictions, blisters; and a very good application is made by mixing Tartar Emetic, with sweet oil or Hogs lard; but those should all be used in the incipient stage, before they swell and become large and a tendency to suppuration is seen. When they have advanced thus far we should assist in their maturation —

by washing the parts with salt water or spirits, lay bites it is known it cannot be done by poultices &c. they may be opened by a lancet when thus brought to a point. Sometimes the disease is conected with debility mancation &c at this inection alkalies have been used but they have shared the fate of most other remedies. Opium has been used at this stage when much irritability exists. As likewise. Sarsaparilla Mezeron, Iston diet drink &c. When ulcers have formed, mild applications may be used. as cold water, salt and water, lead water with the addition of a little laudanum. when of a more malignant character more stimulating applications may be used a solution of Zinc in proportion of

℥j to ℥iij of water, red precipitate, blue vitriol, diluted acids: Ointments.- (I tried in one case the Argentum Nitratum both internally and externally, after many other things had failed; and with decided benefit: internally I commenced with ¼ grain doses, increasing, gradually to 5 grains, and externally to the ulcers in solution, formed by taking two grains of Nitrate Silver, and one ounce of water with the addition of a little brandy, this patient had been using Swaims Panacea for a long time but without any benefit whatever.)

Dr Chapmans has used the nitric acid with unequivocal success, in doses of from ℥j to ℥iij daily; he relates the case of a lady treated in this manner, and at the same time; washing the ulcer

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with the same: and which terminated favourable in a few weeks: many have abandoned the acids and bequeathed to them the same fate as nearly all other remedies; Dr Chapman ascribes it to their giving them in too limited doses. Tonics of every description should be used during the complaint. particularly those of Iron &c. Vegetables alone, or combined with Chalybeates may be made use of with decided advantage. To the foregoing we must not neglect a nourishing diet and which should consist principally of white meats; and other nourishing, but easily digestible food, to give vigour and tone to the system is the only mode of counteracting a Scrofulous Diathesis.

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